

TAX FREEDOM FOR WORKING AMERICANS

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, as we wrap up this work day here in the Senate, I want to take a little time to talk about a subject that is near and dear to everybody's heart, and, of course, that is taxes.

Most Americans believe they pay too much in taxes. And you know, they are right.

One of the biggest and best indicators of how exhausting the tax burden has become is the annual arrival of what we call Tax Freedom Day, and that is the day on which Americans stop working just to pay their State, Federal, and local taxes and actually begin working and keeping their earnings for themselves and their families.

This year, Americans had to wait until today, May 11, before Tax Freedom Day actually arrived. At least 132 days into the year, this is the latest arrival of Tax Freedom Day ever.

As a sign of just how far and fast taxes have come, in 1950, Americans marked Tax Freedom Day on April 3.

For residents in my home State of Minnesota, the situation is even more troubling because this year's Tax Freedom Day has been pushed forward to May 21, nearly 2 weeks later than the rest of the country.

That ranks Minnesota third in the Nation; only in New York and Connecticut do taxpayers have to wait even longer to begin keeping their own money.

Tax Freedom Day, as calculated by the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, reveals an ever-increasing tax burden over the past 25 years. And the single most potent explanation for America's late Tax Freedom Day is our seriously flawed tax system.

Our tax system is unfair, it is complicated, and it is designed to squeeze more money out of the wallets of working Americans to expand Government.

Since 1993, for instance, Federal taxes have increased by 54 percent. Can you imagine that? Since 1993, Federal taxes have increased 54 percent, which for the average taxpayer translates into a \$2,000 per year increase in the amount of taxes they pay to the Federal Government. That is \$2,000 a year more today than just 6 years ago was paid to the Federal Government by the average taxpayer. As a result, Americans today have the largest tax burden ever in history, including World War II, and it is still growing.

Federal taxes now consume on average about 21 percent of our national income, compared to just over 18 percent in 1992. So again, 3 percent more of this country's GDP goes to taxes than it did just 6 years ago. On average, every American—each and every American—is paying \$10,298 this year in Federal, State and local taxes. On average, each American is paying \$10,298 this year to support Government.

A typical family now pays more of its income in total taxes than it spends on food, clothing, transportation, and

housing combined. More and more middle income families are being pushed into higher tax brackets every year.

Here is an example of the devastating "middle class tax squeeze." There are more than 20 million American workers today with annual earnings between \$30,000 and \$50,000. Before 1993, they paid income taxes at the 15 percent tax rate. But most of them have now been pushed into the 28 percent tax bracket, and that is due to inflation and economic growth. Worse still, they have to pay the 28 percent federal income tax rate on top of a 15.3 percent payroll tax.

This adds up, for average Americans making between \$30,000 and \$50,000, to a tax rate of 43 percent to the Federal Government, and that is without counting State, local, and other taxes. So for many Americans, making between \$30,000 and \$50,000 a year, they are paying about 50 percent of their income to support Government. So any gains the taxpayers might have made in wages have been snatched away by Washington in the form of a bigger tax bite. This is the most important reason for the late arrival of Tax Freedom Day.

People today work hard and then are penalized for their work. With punitive taxes, Washington makes the American dream of working hard for a better life more difficult, and even for some, it makes it impossible.

The only way we can effectively stop this and push back Tax Freedom Day is to terminate the Tax Code and replace it with one that promotes freedom and economic opportunity. We must repeal the 16th amendment and abolish the IRS.

We must create a new tax system that is fair, simple, and friendly to the taxpayers—when they no longer need to file a tax return with the IRS, and when their families' finances aren't revealed to Government bureaucrats, and when they are no longer penalized for getting or staying married—or for dying, for that matter—when everyone pays the same tax rate without any loopholes for any special interest groups, and when hidden taxes are eliminated and everyone can easily understand the tax laws. And finally, there will be no more IRS audits and abuse—because, again, we need to pull out the IRS by the roots to abolish the IRS entirely.

Pending fundamental tax reforms, Congress must provide meaningful tax relief to help alleviate the tax burden on working Americans.

That is why the recently-passed budget resolution reserves nearly \$800 billion of the non-Social Security surplus over the next 10 years earmarking it for tax relief.

This proves that this Congress is committed to providing meaningful tax relief in 1999, while protecting Social Security and Medicare, reducing the national debt, and funding important national priorities.

This year's budget also includes my amendment calling on the Congress to

place a priority on middle income tax relief by returning tax overpayments to those from whom it was taken.

It includes options for tax relief, such as a broad-based tax cut, marriage penalty relief, retirement savings incentives, death tax relief, health care-related tax relief, and education-related tax relief. If enacted, this will be the largest tax relief since the Reagan tax cuts of the 1980s.

Americans are frustrated by the late arrival of Tax Freedom Day. They are worried about their future economic security. And they also want the opportunity to put their dollars to work supporting their families, not supporting the Government.

We owe it to the American taxpayer to work together to fix the system through fundamental tax reform. We can do this through turning Tax Freedom Day from a day of disappointment into a day finally worth celebrating.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in adjournment until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, May 12, 1999, at 9:30 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate May 11, 1999:

STATE JUSTICE INSTITUTE

FLORENCE K. MURRAY, OF RHODE ISLAND, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE STATE JUSTICE INSTITUTE FOR A TERM EXPIRING SEPTEMBER 17, 2001. (REAPPOINTMENT)

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION

STUART E. WEISBERG, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION FOR A TERM EXPIRING APRIL 27, 2005. (REAPPOINTMENT)

FOREIGN SERVICE

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED PERSONS OF THE AGENCIES INDICATED FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS OF THE CLASSES STATED, AND ALSO FOR THE OTHER APPOINTMENTS INDICATED HEREWITH:

FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS OF CLASS ONE, CONSULAR OFFICERS AND SECRETARIES IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

JAY M. BERGMAN, OF VIRGINIA
ROBERT STEPHEN BRENT, OF FLORIDA
MARY ALICE KLEINJAN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PAUL E. WEISENFELD, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS OF CLASS TWO, CONSULAR OFFICERS AND SECRETARIES IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

JOHN PATRICE GROARKE, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
TERRY LEE HARDT, OF TEXAS
CAROL HORNING, OF OHIO
ANA R. KLENICKI, OF VIRGINIA
EARLE G. LAWRENCE, OF MARYLAND
THOMAS H. STAAL, OF WISCONSIN

FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS OF CLASS THREE, CONSULAR OFFICERS AND SECRETARIES IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

JEFFREY W. ASHLEY, OF ILLINOIS
ROBERTA MARIE CAVITT, OF ALASKA
AZZA EL-ABD, OF TENNESSEE
HOLLY LYNN FERRETTE, OF NEW JERSEY
ERIN ELIZABETH KINDER, OF CALIFORNIA